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Title: Five ag projects get grants

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Lead:

LOUISA - Farmers' market vendors here will be able to wrap produce for buyers now, thanks to a new state grant.

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LOUISA - Farmers' market vendors here will be able to wrap produce for buyers now, thanks to a new state grant.

The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board recently approved five projects totaling \$202,124 - including \$1,900 for the Lawrence County Farmers' Market Association Inc. - in the second round of the 2005 Farmers' Market Competitive Grants.

Lawrence's grant is for a plastic wrapper, plastic remover and trailer to offer as shared-use equipment for county producers.

Lawrence County's wasn't the only area market to get a helping hand from the state.

The Johnson County Extension District received \$22,300 to construct a covered shed for the Johnson County Farmers' Market.

State agriculture development grants are funded through tobacco settlement dollars administered by a board under the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy.

It also administers cost-share grants in counties, where farmers can apply for specific programs.

The most recent funding includes \$167,500 for Greenup County:

" \$52,500 in the Cattle Handling Facilities program, which helps beef and dairy producers better manage herds with handling chutes and other equipment.

" \$105,000 in the Fencing Improvement program, which helps improve net farm income through improved pasture quantity, quality and efficient use of fencing for livestock producers.

" And \$10,000 in the Goat Diversification program, which works to assist producers to venture into meat goat and dairy goat production.

Also, Rowan County received \$13,426 in the Forage Improvement program, which improves pastures to allow for improved grazing by animals, reducing producer costs for feed, and improving feed quality.

Farmers in those counties may apply for some of the cost share funds at the local extension office. Most programs have a limit and require the farmer put up half the cost.

The monies here come from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund, which was created by the state investing 50 percent of its lawsuit settlement with tobacco companies into programs lessening the state's dependence on tobacco production.

To do that, regional, statewide and county model projects receive grants to revitalize the farm economy or diversify.

Since the inception of the program in January 2001, the Agricultural Development Board has approved more than 2,100 proposals committing over \$182 million to projects, officials said.

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